

VERMONT TELEGRAPH.

ORSON S. MURRAY, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

"I AM SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL."

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From the Calcutta Christian Observer, of November 1835.

(Forwarded to the Editor of the Vermont Telegraph.)

MISSIONARY PROSPECTS IN BARMAH.

An Address delivered at the Monthly Missionary Prayer Meeting of various denominations of Christians held at the Union Chapel, Calcutta, October 5, 1835. By N. BROWN, American Missionary.

Having been requested to lay before you this evening a short account of the Barman Mission, I propose to notice in the first place some of the difficulties which the peculiar habits, religion, and government of the Barman present to missionary operations; and, secondly, what success has hitherto attended the efforts that have been made.

In order to give some idea of the influence which the religious system of the Barman exerts over the minds of its votaries, it is necessary that I should present a brief sketch of their belief, as contained in their sacred books. It will not of course be expected that I shall give any thing more than a mere outline.

According to the sacred writings of the Barman, the base of the universe is a vast plane, infinite in extent, and containing an infinite number of Sekya systems, or worlds. These systems are exact circles, each bounded by an immense circular wall or mountain, 82,000 yuzanas, or upwards of a million miles in height. The diameter of each Sekya system is 15 millions of miles. They are placed in contact with each other, and the intermediate spaces are reserved for hells, where the wicked are tormented.

The ground composing the earth, or foundation of each of these Sekya systems, (including the waters of the ocean, which is 84,000 yuzanas, or about 1,050,000 miles, deep,) extends to the depth of one million and a half miles. Below this is solid rock, reaching to a still further depth of one million and a half miles. This rock is sustained by a sheet of water, extending down 6,000,000 miles. Under the whole is an expanse of air, the thickness of which is 12,000,000 miles.

As the Sekya systems are all similar, it is necessary to describe only the one upon which we live. In the centre of the system rises the Myenmo mountain. This is 1,050,000 miles high, and sinks into the water to the same depth. It is surrounded by seven concentric ranges or rings of mountain, which are separated from each other by seven rings of water. The inner mountain, called Yaganho, is half the height of Myenmo; the next mountain half the height of this, and so on. Between these mountains, and the great outer mountain which bounds the system, are the ocean, the four great islands, and 2000 small islands.

The beings who inhabit a Sekya system include 31 different states, four of which being below man, are considered states of punishment. The superior celestial states of heaven are 26. Ascending from man, we have the six heavens of the Nats, of which the first is Sadumharit, half way up Myenmo mountain, and 525,000 miles above the surface of the ocean. Here the inhabitants live through a period of 9,000,000 years, before they transigrate to other states. It is at this distance above the earth that the sun, moon, and planets are placed, where they revolve about Myenmo mountain. The sun is only 625 miles, (in diameter,) while the moon is 612, wanting only 13 miles to be equal in size to the sun. The eclipses are occasioned by a Nat of immense size, 60,000 miles high, and measuring 15,000 miles across his breast, who in his sport occasionally obscures the sun and moon from the sight of men. According to the Barman theory, one of his fingers is of sufficient size to cover the sun.

On the summit of Myenmo is the Tawadingha heaven, a plain 125,000 miles in extent. The duration of life in this state is 36,000,000 years. Above this, at a distance of 621,000 miles, is suspended the third heaven of the Nats. Still higher, and at similar distances, are suspended the remaining three. The joys of these

It will be observed that the orthography of this word is different from that in common use in this country. It will also be collected that "Erawadi" was used instead of Irrawaddy, in a letter from Dr. Brown, published in the Telegraph. (En. Tex.)

six states are represented as consisting of sensual pleasures, which have been gained by their inhabitants in consequence of their extraordinary merits during previous existences. In the highest of these states, the duration of life is 9,216,000,000 years.

As we ascend to the heavens of the Brahmas, the duration of life becomes too great for computation. These 16 heavens are situated in nine separate planes, suspended one above another, at intervals of 68,850,000 miles distant. Above them all are the four invisible heavens, separated from each other at similar distances. The highest of them is at the immense distance of 898,200,000 miles above the surface of the earth. The descriptions of all these states, in the Barman scriptures, are very stupendous as well as circumstantial. They are represented in such colors as to operate strongly on the minds of the simple Barman, and to charm them into a belief of their truth.

Descending from man, the Barman reckon four states of punishment; 1. brutes; 2. pyttas, a species of existences that dwell in the mountains, some of them having beautiful bodies, but inwardly consuming with secret fire, and enduring various other kinds of torment; 3. athurakes, which are nine miles high, with mouths no larger than the eye of a needle, and constantly famishing with hunger; 4. hell, properly so called, which is situated below the surface of the earth, and without the boundary wall of the Sekya system. This place of punishment consists of eight principal hells, which are arranged directly above each other, and differing as it respects the duration and extent of suffering. These are described in the Barman sacred books with every horrible illustration of torture and wretchedness which the ingenuity of man could devise. The duration of punishment in the first or most tolerable of these states, is 1,620,000,000,000 years; in the second 12,960,000,000,000; in the sixth it rises above 4,000 times this period to the almost inconceivable period of 53,084,160,000,000,000 years; while in the two lowest states, the duration of existence is altogether beyond computation. Notwithstanding all these terrible representations, the fear of punishment seems generally to have little effect either upon the heart or conduct.

Through these 31 states, according to the Barman notion, all living existences are constantly transigrating. The destiny of all depends on their previous merit. Merit is acquired, and crime expiated, by suffering, as well as by good deeds. So that there is a constant round of transmigration; the inhabitants of the lowest hell rising by degrees to a sphere of enjoyment, and the occupants of the superior abodes occasionally descending to their miserable state. A being that existed as a Nat today, may become a man, a dog, or a worm to-morrow. Hence the Barman consider *neigban*, a term which they appear universally to understand as meaning *annihilation*, or a cessation from the tedious round of existence, as the most desirable of all states. Their deity, Buddha, or Godama, like the numerous deities before him, obtained this state after having suffered almost endless transigrations, and ages upon ages of punishment, in its various forms. The Barman, however, cannot be properly said to have any deity; since Godama, during his life, is not supposed to have been either the creator, the preserver, or the punisher of men, but only their teacher and guide; nor did he possess the power of conferring upon them happiness, or canceling their sins; much less can he perform the offices of a deity now that he has become extinct. The Barman, however, suppose that by worshipping his image, they pay the same homage to exalted goodness, and obtain the same degree of merit, that they would obtain if Godama himself were alive to receive their adorations.

The geography (if such it may be called) of the Barman, is not less fanciful than their ideas of astronomy. Between the Myenmo mountain and the other boundary wall of the system, is a vast expanse of ocean, 6,471,000 miles in breadth. This ocean derives its color from that of the Myenmo mountain. The northern side of Myenmo is pure gold, and the color of the northern ocean is yellow; the eastern side is of silver, and the eastern ocean white; the southern side of the mountain is sapphire, and the southern ocean blue; the western side is glass, and the northern ocean of a corresponding color. Within this ocean are four great islands or continents. The northern island is in the form of a circle, 100,000 miles in diameter; on this island the inhabitants live to the age of 10,000 years. The great eastern island is in the shape of a half-moon; and the western is in the form of a rectangle, 112,500 miles in length. The southern, or Zambudipa island, upon which we live, is no less than 125,000 miles in extent.

Each of these four islands is surrounded by 500 small islands, making in all 2,000. The shape of every small island is the same as that of the continent with which it is connected; and throughout the earth, the face of the inhabitants corresponds in shape to the continent or island upon which they dwell.

In the interior of our island is the great forest of Himmawanda, where most of the marvelous scenes related in the Barman sacred writings took place. Here is situated the circular lake Nawadat, which is 625 miles in diameter, and is

surrounded and hidden from the sun's rays by five overhanging mountains, one of which is pure gold, another silver, &c. Each of these mountains rises to the height of 2,500 miles. At the entrance of a cave in one of these mountains, there grows a tree, 12 miles in diameter, and 1,250 miles in height, under which the demigods assemble. Besides Nawadat, there are six other circular lakes, each 625 miles in diameter. Some of them are surrounded by concentric rings of the most beautiful flowers, and fruit trees of every description.

From the Nawadat lake, issue four rivers, which, after thrice encircling the lake, go off to the north, east, south, and west. The southern stream, after running 3,500 miles, sometimes over mountains, sometimes under ground, or through vast caverns, at length separates into five branches, forming the Ganges, and other great rivers, which water India and the adjacent countries.

I have been somewhat particular in describing the geography and astronomy of the Barman, for the purpose of pointing out what I conceive to be one of the most effectual weapons wherewith to weaken their attachment to idolatry; I mean the instruction of the young. From the sketch I have given, it will be evident to every one, that a knowledge of the true principles of geography and astronomy would completely destroy their faith in the Buddhist religion. Only let a Barman thoroughly believe that there is such a continent as America, of a shape and size corresponding to our description of it, and the religion in which he has hitherto placed his confidence, becomes to him but a fable.

The Barman priests, or monks, as they might with more propriety be called, afford us the most perfect specimen of the practical influence of their religion. In difference being their highest virtue, they endeavor to annihilate every feeling, both of body and mind, and to become mere abstractions. Their chief employment consists in repeating over and over certain forms of worship which they have learned from the Pali, their sacred language, but which scarcely any of them understand. They are by no means a learned class, but are generally more ignorant, stupid, and lazy than any other portion of the people. They are not the preachers or expounders of their own religion; (this office belongs to a separate class, who are called *shayas* or teachers;) but are mere ascetics, living secluded in their monasteries, and ordinarily going through the streets but once a day, to receive contributions of boiled rice. They are not allowed to marry, or to have any connection with the world, which they have professed to renounce. They never deal with money, but are dependant for their habitation, food, and clothing, upon the contributions of the laity, whose male children they in return instruct in reading, which is almost the only branch taught by them. No provision is made for the instruction of the females.

Another great obstacle in the way of missionary efforts amongst the Barman, and closely connected with their religion and literature, is their groveling habits of thinking. The idea of examining for themselves, to ascertain whether their religion is true or false, is an idea which seems never to enter their minds. Only set a Barman upon the track of examination, and very likely he becomes convinced at once; but the difficulty is to start him. In nine cases out of ten, the only argument that a Barman offers in defence of his religion is, that it has been given him by his ancestors. They examined the subject thoroughly, and if they could not arrive at the truth, what utter folly would it be for him, at this late day, to investigate the subject over again. "It is our custom; it is the custom of our fathers," is to them a sufficient ground of action, in religion as well as every thing else. For this reason, I am convinced that the introduction of European literature, in connection with christianity, would have a powerful tendency to give the mind an impulse—to start it upon a new track, and thus enable it to throw off the shackles under which it has lain torpid for ages. Nay, I think that even the introduction of the more useful mechanical and agricultural arts, would have no considerable tendency the same way. It may indeed be replied, that it is the Gospel, and not education, or civilization, that is to convert the nations. But I cannot believe that a state of ignorance, stupidity, and blind attachment to old customs, is the field where christianity achieves its brightest triumphs. In order for the truths of the gospel to take effect, they must be examined, and felt, and attended to; and in order to be thus examined and felt, they must be presented to thinking and inquiring minds.

The third grand obstacle to missionary efforts in Barman is the Government. The Barman are not merely subjects of the king of Ava, but his slaves. This is as really true of them in religion, as it is in politics. The doctrine of the Barman court is, that it is time for the people to change their religion, when their Master changes his. Hence there can be no such thing as toleration. The most that can be hoped for is *suferance*, on the part of the acting authorities in the various provinces. But even this can hardly be expected. Severe persecutions have several times been carried on against the native con-

verts. In all cases where accusations have been brought against them, they have never escaped without a heavy fine, and frequently severe punishment. A little more than a year ago, the pastor of the native church in Rangoon was imprisoned, and his feet made fast to blocks, which were then drawn up, leaving him suspended by the feet, while his head rested on the ground. His whole frame being thus put upon the stretch, he was suffered to remain till completely exhausted, and as he was an old man, his health and strength will probably never again be fully restored.

Still later, a number of the christians at Rangoon were seized, among whom was one of our most faithful preachers. He was threatened with death unless he would renounce the new religion, and according to Barman law, the rulers had no doubt a right to execute it. The test proposed to him was to worship the image of Buddha; but he remained firm, and declared that he could never renounce the religion of Jesus, although he had every prospect of a cruel death. He was, however, at length liberated, on the payment of large sums of money; but was dismissed with the threatening that he should be immediately executed, in case he should ever attempt to preach or distribute tracts again. At this time the persecution was also extended to the Karen converts residing in the jungles west of Rangoon, from whom large sums of money were extorted, and some of them, it is reported, have renounced their religion.

The hostile bearing of the government towards christianity, may be seen from the fear which is every where witnessed among the people in receiving tracts. In passing through villages with tracts, often almost every individual will refuse; sometimes they will take a book, and if they perceive one of their chiefs likely to meet them in the streets, they will instantly return it, or carefully conceal it among their garments. In Prome, and some other cities, orders have been regularly proclaimed through the streets, forbidding all persons from accepting the foreigners' books, under the penalties of the law.

Remainder next week.

NURSERY MAXIMS.

The following "Nursery Hints" we have recently received from a distinguished missionary in Eastern Asia. We are sure that our readers will peruse them with interest. When the families of our country are trained up under the influence of such maxims, domestic sorrow will be almost unknown.—*Religious Magazine.*

Judicious mothers will always keep in mind that they are the first book read and the last laid aside in every child's library.—Every look, word, tone and gesture—nay, even dress, makes an impression.

Remember that children are men in miniature—and though they are childish and should be allowed to act as children, still all our dealings with them should be manly, though not morose.

Be always kind and cheerful in their presence—playful, but never light, communicative but never extravagant in statements nor vulgar in language nor gestures.

Never trifle with a child nor speak disrespectfully to it when it is doing any improper thing, or when watching an opportunity to do so.

Always follow commands with a close and careful watch, until you see that the child does the thing commanded—allowing of no evasion, nor modification, unless the child ask it, and it is expressly granted.

Never break a promise made to a child, or if you do, give your reasons, and if in fault, own it, and ask pardon if necessary.

Never trifle with a child's feelings when under discipline.

Children ought never to be governed by the fear of the rod or of private chastisements or of dark rooms.

Correcting a child on suspicion or without understanding the whole matter is the way to make him hide his faults by equivocation or a lie—to justify himself—or to disregard you altogether because he sees you do not understand the case and are in the wrong.

Never reprove a child severely in company, nor make light of their feelings, nor hold them up to ridicule.

Never try to conceal any thing which the child knows you have, but by your own conduct teach him to be frank and manly and open—never hiding things in his hand nor slyly concealing himself or his designs.

Kindness and tenderness of feelings towards insects, birds, and the young even of such animals as should be killed if old (excepting poisonous ones,) are to be carefully cherished.

I am pleased with such children as allow those roses and other flowers that blossom on the Sabbath to remain on the tree to praise their Maker in their own beauty and sweetness. "This is the incense of the heart, whose fragrance smells to heaven."

Much is said about winning souls to Christ, but I see nothing in the Bible about driving them. This should be ever kept in mind in the management of children. Everything like severity or constraint defeats the very objects in view.

Always speak of the Sabbath, of religion and of death in such a way as to show that you consider them desirable, or subjects of happy meditation, and show by all you do that the Sabbath and religion are your great delight, and that death is the gate to heaven—and dying only going home.

ans should always take the part of the exhorter or preacher, and if the language has been harsh they should word the important truth in more mild and winning language, but be careful to make the child feel that what was said is true or contains an important truth, and intended for the salvation of the soul, and must be attended to. This secures the parent's co-operation and prayers, and the blessing of God. But if the parent feels hurt, thinks the child abused, & takes its part, the blessing is lost.

Never speak in an impatient or fretful manner by way of accusing or of finding fault, but having these faults in mind, tell them kindly how the thing in which they have failed should have been said or done.

When a child breaks a glass or cup, or does any other damage by accident, it is well not to say anything at the time. Make the best of what cannot be mended—and wait until you see how the child's own mind is affected in view of it, and then give reproof or advice as may seem desirable—always avoiding putting the child in slavish fear.

Never say to a child, "I don't believe what you say," nor express doubts. If you have such feelings, keep your own thoughts and wait with watchfulness. Truth will eventually be plain.

Repeating the bad language or telling the bad conduct of others in the hearing of children, or allowing them to repeat or tell of what they have heard by way of idle talk, is impressing on their minds knowledge which the wicked heart turns into a sad temptation which may follow them through life.

All witch stories and the relation of things frightful or shocking to common feelings, & all extravagance in expression should be carefully avoided on the parent's part, and disapproved in the child.

Never speak evil and suspiciously of your neighbors before your children; and more especially never speak to the disparagement of their companions or playmates, nor allow them to speak or write so to you. If there are evident defects which the child must see, mention them by way of caution as things not to be imitated, and not in such a way as to lead the child to think itself superior.

All compulsion in making a child attend to such duties, reading or work, as are peculiarly unpleasant to it, is a sort of teasing which not only sets the child more against the thing itself, but against you too. Such forcing leads to dissipation of mind, and to discouragements, if not sulky disobedience. In such cases, parents or guardians may "thank themselves" for dull children, and for all the dislike to the Bible and to various other books, &c. which are not unfrequently seen not only in youth but in manhood.

Giving paper to small children to tear for amusement teaches them to tear books.

Allowing children to play with fire or a knife endangers their own lives and the lives of others.

Better send children away at prayer-time than to allow them to play with books, &c. and make a noise. The former is an evil of absence—the latter of thoughtlessness to themselves and of disturbance to others—both of which should be avoided at such times.

I have often been in doubt about the management of a child when sick or in feeble health. But having seen in some few cases the effects of indulgence, I am led to believe that even for the health of the child as well as for the good of his temper and morals, a gentle but even and steady government is better than indulgence.

When a child is angry or in a passion, never speak to him about his soul, or try to impress upon him the fear or the love of God. Wait and take another opportunity.

Never disappoint the confidence a child places in you, whether it relate to a thing placed in your care or to a promise. Faithfully and promptly fulfil all such promises, and show that you may be confidently trusted.

Always give prompt attention to a child when he speaks, so as to prevent repeated calls, and that he may give prompt attention when you call him. Either gratify or deny him, or show him that his remarks or requests are improper or untimely. The child who calls Mamma! Mamma! Mamma! without attention, will give no attention when called.

At a table a child should be taught to sit up and behave in a manly manner, and not allowed to leave his chair or take food without asking, or to tease when denied. The bare expression of a parent's wish at such a time should be law from which no appeal should be made.

Give a child his choice of such food on the table as his parents think healthy for him considering times and circumstances; at the same time guarding most carefully against the propensity so common among children to have things nice and sweet, &c. The maxim will hold good among children as among men, that we should eat for the strength of the body and not to please the taste. Delicate appetites are generally those made so by delicacy of taste.

The practice of allowing children to read at family prayers is commendable; but this privilege should not be granted until the child can keep his place and read without spelling and with but little help from the parent, who may pronounce hard names or other hard words for him. Finding the place and spelling words are at direct variance with the spirit of devotion. L. S.

Taken from the Sunday School Journal.

NOTES FOR MYSELF.

Third Selection.

Watch against all eagerness and immoderate delight in eating and drinking; and against minding any kind of food, for the pleasing of the sense. Come to thy meals not like a brute, but as becomes a saint. Never terminate in the sensitive pleasures, but make use of it to raise thy heart to God.

When thou hast eaten so much, as that thou thinkest more is not expedient, or is better forbore than taken, proceed not a bit more, lest thou be entangled or disturbed.

Seek the lawful contentment of any that are about thee, as thou dost thy own; and be as glad to gratify them as thyself, so far as it is convenient for them. Hate and shun all motives of unworthy selfishness; and see that others be shapers with thee in thy pleasant things, and be not content to have them to thyself alone.

Be not over solicitous for humouring thyself in sensitive enjoyments, but rather suspicious of it, and be attemperance from it. Always mind and do the present duty. Comply with the present dispensation, and make the most of it. Thy business is to please God, and God will provide for thy comfort.

Lay thy heart to rest in God, for there is no other rest for the soul to be thought on.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

From the writings of Rowland Hill.

Every preacher should have these qualifications—1. A little good sense in his head; for God do not employ foolishness in his service. 2. Plenty of good grace in his heart. Nothing will do without this, for a man cannot preach about what he knows not and has not. 3. A good competent knowledge of the word of God. A man must study the things of God, and give himself wholly to them. And we have reason to thank God that there are now so many precious helps, good commentaries and other books which give abundant information.

That man is a bad preacher in the pulpit who is not a good preacher out of it; and no man in the world has right to stand up for God, if God has not adorned him with personal holiness. We should preach by what we are, as well as what we say.

Better a thousand times to have the simplicity of a Peter than the eloquence of a Longinus, if we are but made useful to the souls of our fellow creatures. That preaching is always the best that answers the end of preaching; let us therefore go forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom; and that too with simplicity and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom; and what has been done shall be again done.—God will ever stand by his own truth, and if he be for us, who shall be against us?

NEW-YORK STATE TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.

Continued.

FRIDAY MORNING Feb. 12.

The motions which were laid on the table last night were taken up. Mr G. Smith said he did not see any thing to be gained by a re-commitment. The question was taken, and the motion lost. The question then recurred on Mr Smith's substitute.

Gerrit Smith. Mr President, I believe the great question in controversy is this.—Shall this society revive the old pledge as such, or recommend it, or give any sanction to it? Some of us are prepared to attempt to show, that the circulation of the old pledge is not only inexpedient, but wrong, morally wrong. I am one of those who believe it wrong to give any sanction to the use of that pledge.

How can the drunkard be reclaimed?

I answer: Not by treating him as he was wont to be treated of old, with harshness and cruelty; not as he was treated of old, when no man cared for his soul. He can be saved by a system of kindness, by love, taking him by the hand, restoring him to society, awakening in his bosom a feeling of self-respect. Let the sober do all they can to subdue the drunkard's appetite for strong drink, and to keep out of his reach and out of his sight the fatal temptation. Of course, if the sober are to reclaim the drunken, the sober cannot drink. If they do, they virtually invite the drunkard to drink. If they do, they perpetuate the inward flame, which is fatal to the drunkard, they keep open the streams at which the drunkard will lie down and drink and die.

But it is objected against this position of ours, that fermented liquors are healthful. For the sake of the argument, I will admit. It is said too that the Jews were permitted to drink wine and strong drink.—Admitted. It is said that the Savior did not forbid the use of these inferior drinks. Admitted. For the sake of argument I will admit that the vile compounds which are sold with us under the name of wine are identified with the pure juice of the grape which the Jews were permitted to drink. All these concessions being made, still it will not be pretended that all these drinks are indispensable to health, or that God commands us to drink them. Here then we take our stand. The use of fermented drinks is not being essential to health, and not being commanded by God, we are bound to give them up on account of